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Sen. Bob Morton

## Where are our priorities?

Both state and federal governments have poured an endless amount of money into the restoration of salmon and salmon habitat.

Why?

The governor says, "They are vital to the state's quality of life, history and culture."

Quality of life, history and culture are very important, but where are our priorities?

The livelihood of rural Washington has been attacked for years.

Our economy continues to struggle, and people are out of jobs. Northeast Washington has seen the relative demise of the mining industry and the devastating closure of the mill in Republic. Our small forest landowners are being picked on with the requirement of road maintenance and abandonment plans at an estimated cost of \$375 million, all in the name of salmon.

Our agriculture industry constantly takes a back seat on water issues. During the 2001 drought, salmon were given priority over the water rights of our struggling irrigators. This year, agriculture has yet again taken a backseat to municipalities in the governor's proposed water legislation.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for rural folks to support their families as mounting laws and policies favor salmon over our people.

This priority is severely out of line.

As the governor proposes to spend \$43 million for salmon recovery in the 2003-2005 two-year budget, 60,000 people run the risk of being dropped from the Basic Health Plan. Where are our priorities?

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